

Chapter One

WHAT JESUS SAW IN HEAVEN

When everything looks perfect.

The road leading a believer to being tempted or to face trials begins a long way. It begins when everything looks perfect and brilliant just like a beautiful Sunday morning. One has received Jesus in his heart, regularly attends church, lives a honest life, may be having a prosperous ministry, does everything according to God's Word in the Bible and one generally expects a brilliant life of a blessed Christian. If you are still at this stage, then thank God that this message is in your hands. This is exactly how Job started. The Bible tells us that at this stage Job was perfect, upright and shunned evil. He had a wonderful marriage and God had blessed him with riches and good children, How about our Lord Jesus Christ? Before he was tempted, Jesus had everything sparkling. He had just been baptized by one of the greatest prophet that ever lived and he had just been filled with the Holy Spirit in a spectacular way. And in a rare show of divine favor God opened the heavens to tell the whole world that Jesus was his special Son.

Then the road passes behind the scenes.

This section of the road, leading a believer to temptation and trials, actually passes through heaven, beyond your physical sight. There is a lot of satanic activity. Everything is hidden from the eyes of the believer, except when God reveals these activities to you supernaturally. The disciples had all along focused their attention on Jesus until he opened their spiritual eyes concerning what Satan was doing. In the New Testament Jesus revealed this section of the road to his disciples when he spoke these unusual words after the Last Supper:

Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.

Luke 22:31-32 NIV

[This was the first, out of the seven Scriptures, the Lord presented in this vision]

The Amplified version of the Bible puts this Scripture even better,

Simon, Simon (Peter), listen! Satan has asked excessively that [all of] you be given to him [out of the power and keeping of God], that he might sift [all of] you like grain. But I have prayed especially for you [Peter] that your [own] faith may not fail; and when you yourself have turned again strengthen and establish your brethren. Luke 22: 31-32 TAB

Jesus' words in this Scripture raise many questions. If you study these words well, you will realize that Satan was asking for permission to tempt the disciples. Certainly Satan was not seeking this permission from Jesus. If this was so Jesus couldn't have allowed the devil to sift his disciples, and therefore, it would not have been necessary for him to pray over this matter. So whom was Satan talking to? Where was Satan located as he was making this request? Why was it necessary for Satan to ask? Why didn't the devil just go ahead and tempt the disciples as he wished? If you look again at this Scripture you will realize that Satan's request had already been granted, that's why Simon was so tempted that he denied the name of Jesus three times. Why wasn't Satan's plea rejected? Instead of praying over this matter why didn't Jesus use his power and authority to rebuke and block Satan's demand?

Satan was seeking God's permission.

Satan does many things affecting Christians without their knowledge. In this Scripture Jesus was revealing to his disciples what he had seen in the spiritual realm. Even though he was physically on earth, Jesus was constantly viewing what was happening in heaven. He was revealing to his disciples what their human eyes had not seen. Jesus was alerting them that he had seen Satan asking for permission to tempt them. The truth is that Satan was asking for authorization from God our Father.

Where did Satan find God? Again this Scripture does not tell us, but the fact is that Satan found God in heaven. How do we verify these two facts? Jesus tells us that everything has already been revealed through the Scriptures. We confirm these two facts from the Bible - in the book of Job. This book reveals a lot concerning the methods Satan uses to tempt believers even today. In this book, before Satan tempted Job, he first went to heaven and asked God our Father for permission to tempt this faithful and innocent servant of God.

Job never knew anything about Satan's activities.

Job suffered partly because he knew little about Satan's malicious heavenly activities. Like many Christians today, he was not aware that Satan could gain access

to God's presence in heaven, and even have a dialogue with our Almighty Father. He never knew that the devil was capable of accusing him before God and successfully obtain permission to come and tempt him here on earth. Today many Christians say they don't have time to talk about the devil. But compare the life of Job with that of our Lord Jesus Christ. Job never knew anything about Satan's secret operations in heaven. But throughout his ministry on earth Jesus always exposed the devil's works and secret operations. This is what this message is all about. Jesus reveals to us Satan's secret heavenly operations and gives us a weapon to overcome.

Satan has to be permitted by God.

Another fact we learn from the words Jesus spoke in Luke 22:31-32 is that Satan cannot tempt a believer unless he is first permitted by God. According to the written Word of God, Satan cannot even cause one sparrow, as small and cheap as it is, to fall on the ground unless God permits him to do so (Matthew 10:29). Do you know of any Christian who fell into sin recently? Then know that God permitted Satan to carry out that temptation. As it was in the case of Job, Satan cannot cause a Christian to sin unless he first gets authorization from our Father in heaven.

Jesus' words to his disciples in Luke 22:31-32 raise several questions.

1. Can Satan really go into God's presence in heaven today? Isn't God's glory and holiness too powerful for the devil?
2. Can God talk to Satan, and can Satan talk to God today?
3. Why does Satan go into God's presence in heaven? There must be a strong reason why Satan goes to our Father.
4. Can God permit the devil to tempt faithful Christians? Are they not very precious in the eyes of God?
5. Why didn't Jesus use his powers and authority to stop Satan from tempting Simon Peter? Today why doesn't Jesus stop Satan from tempting some faithful believers?
6. What are we supposed to do to protect ourselves from temptations and trials?

The written Word is God's light to us in this dark world. Starting with the next chapter, the Holy Spirit uses the already mentioned seven Scriptures to answer all the questions above.